



# Studying U.S. Music in the 21st Century: A Colloquium

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# Colloquy

## Studying U.S. Music in the Twenty-First Century

CHARLES HIROSHI GARRETT and CAROL J. OJA,  
Convenors

### Introduction

CHARLES HIROSHI GARRETT and CAROL J. OJA

From the vantage point of 2011, much about the United States and its place in the world feels in flux, whether in the realm of economic power, international standing, demographic profile, or climate change. Instability has also become the norm with respect to the cultural status of American education, the position of the arts and humanities in universities and the culture at large, and the budget forecasts of academic employers. The bottom line, perhaps, is that time will need to pass before we can assess the impact on our professional lives and research choices of such recent events as the “War on Terror,” the economic downturn in 2008, and the digital revolution.

A sense of destabilization—of living in a fundamentally different world, the dimensions and implications of which have yet to be discerned—is palpable. Our students arrive multimusical, performing their daily activities against the backdrop of playlists unfixed by national borders or genre boundaries, and their fluid and diverse identities prompt continually refreshed sets of expectations. The way we work has revolutionized as well. Just as digital clouds have vaporized our LP and CD collections so too they deliver an ever-increasing abundance of research and teaching material to our laptops. Ten years ago, few of us had launched PowerPoint, issued a Google search, or felt the necessity of warning our students about the perils of Wikipedia. Indeed, this colloquy was conducted almost exclusively by electronic means, and this sentence was co-written online using a Web-based word processor.

We are grateful to Emily Abrams Ansari, Loren Kajikawa, and Gayle Sherwood Magee for offering comments on both this introduction and our concluding reflections to this colloquy, and to Samuel Parler for compiling the composite bibliography and assisting with editorial details.

The scholarly questions we pose and the subjects we study also have shifted dramatically. Methodological upheavals have been felt for the past few decades in response to increasing interest in interdisciplinarity, critical theory, and cultural studies. As a result, issues of race and gender, power and politics, sexuality and identity, now inflect our musical research as a matter of routine. In addition, a burst of enthusiasm for exploring twentieth- and twenty-first-century topics—along with the dramatic growth of scholarship on popular music—has reshaped our discipline.

For music scholars who identify as “Americanists,” the last couple of decades have brought a remarkable change of status within the field of musicology. For much of the second half of the twentieth century, Americanists struggled with “the general assumption among musicologists” that “American studies are not readily reconcilable with traditional studies in European-American musicology, and hence cannot be included in musicology as a branch of learning or a scholarly procedure”—an attitude challenged by Donald M. McCorkle in this journal in 1966.<sup>1</sup> That statement was published amidst a cluster of interrelated revolutions in the 1960s and 1970s, as social history gained momentum and women’s studies, ethnic studies, and other cross-disciplinary initiatives emerged with force. The country’s Bicentennial brought increased attention to American music, including the founding of New World Records, the Institute for Studies in American Music at Brooklyn College (directed by H. Wiley Hitchcock), and the Sonneck Society (now the Society for American Music). In the early 1980s, the American Musicological Society undertook sponsorship of MUSA (Music of the United States of America), a series of scholarly editions of American music under the directorship of Richard Crawford; these editions, which began appearing in 1993, have further registered the integration of American studies into mainstream musicology.<sup>2</sup> As of 2011, scholarship on music in the United States appears to have attained the academic equivalent of full citizenship.

Recognizing these shifts, Annegret Fauser, as Editor-in-Chief of this *Journal*, invited the two of us to head up a colloquy to explore the state of “Studying U.S. Music” at this particular historical moment. The project appealed to our shared sense of uncertainty about where the field might be heading.<sup>3</sup> We drafted a series of questions, seeking to reexamine critical issues and respond to today’s key challenges, and we aimed for a diverse roster of

1. McCorkle, “Finding a Place for American Studies in American Musicology,” 74. (For full references, see the combined list of Works Cited at the end of the Colloquy.)

2. For an account of the history of MUSA, together with a perspective on the integration of American studies into musicology, see Crawford, “MUSA’s Early Years: The Life and Times of a National Editing Project.”

3. Reflecting how quickly the field is shifting underneath us, this colloquy arrives only seven years after the last major assessment of the field. See Davidson, ed., “Symposium: Disciplining American Music,” with contributions by Cockrell, Ramsey Jr., Rasmussen, and Shelemay.

participants who could reflect a variety of individual, disciplinary, and geographic perspectives. We posted the following charge to our participants:

- What, from your perspective, are the major research issues and conceptual challenges facing Americanists today? In what directions do you wish the field would further develop? How do issues such as globalization, shifting U.S. demographics, emerging technologies, current U.S. politics, and cross-cultural encounters affect your approach to the field?
- How do we as scholars—often as scholar-activists—position ourselves in relation to the study of U.S. music and to the wide variety of disciplinary approaches taken to studying it? To what extent does studying American music threaten to embody American exceptionalism? At an even more basic level, what is your comfort level these days with the terms “American music” or “Americanist”?
- Whatever your overarching perspective, what are the specific areas of study and modes of inquiry in relation to music in the U.S. that energize you today?

Our contributors include George E. Lewis, Gayle Sherwood Magee, Alejandro L. Madrid, Sherrie Tucker, and Robert Fink. Here is what they had to say.

## Americanist Musicology and Nomadic Noise

GEORGE E. LEWIS

I was born and reared in our American womb of empire, but my experience and my study of history have enabled me to understand that we must leave that imperial incubator if we are to become citizens of the real world. Our future is here and now, a community to be created among ourselves so that we can be citizens—not imperial overlords—of the world.<sup>4</sup>

In philosophy, we are not dealing with the mere creation of a work of art: the goal is rather to transform *ourselves*.<sup>5</sup>

I'm writing this from Mexico City, attending a conference on computational creativity, an interdiscipline in which the study of music is quite important. Playing hooky from the talks, I visited the Mexican national sound archive, Fonoteca, which was showing a collection of musical instruments assembled by the late rock musician, Jorge Reyes. Alongside the pre-Columbian instruments, both original and reconstructed, stood a Fender Stratocaster and an

4. Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life*, xii; quoted in Brown, *Beyond the Frontier: The Midwestern Voice in American Historical Writing*, 127.

5. Hadot, “Philosophy as a Way of Life,” 268.

Electro-Harmonix compressor unit; the juxtaposition put to rest notions of premodern authenticity, portraying Mexican culture not only as historically *mestizo*, but also as globalized and technologically adept. This experience, along with my discussions after conference hours with experimentalist Mexican composer-improvisors such as Remi Alvarez and Roberto Morales-Manzanares, made me wonder, as so many are doing now, about the propriety of limiting “Americanist” musical research to the United States.

The next day the conference attendees visited the National Palace, the historical seat of government. The public portion of the tour reminded me that even as an “Americanist,” my grasp of the historical and musical intersections between Mexico and the U.S. was meager at best. Starting with the spectacular Diego Rivera stairwell mural, a dramatic representation of what George Lipsitz called “the long fetch of history,”<sup>6</sup> we were seeing U.S. history from the other side; there was even a portrait of George Washington, a gift from the government of the United States, in one of the Presidential offices.

I claim the touristic mantle of ignorance freely, but I want to use these experiences to pop the question of whether a future Americanist musicology might more profitably begin from a global perspective—not so much a comparative, border-drawing methodology, but an integrative one that implicitly recognizes the permanence of permeability, the transience of borders, and a *mestizaje*<sup>7</sup> that draws its power from dialogue with an American trope of mobility. Once upon a time, the study of “music in American life” seemed relatively straightforward conceptually; that is, it was largely a Euro-American construct. In that context, John Cage’s anecdote about the relative distance from “tradition” of Americans and Europeans still made sense, and it did so within a tacit cultural pact of a binary, whiteness-imbued politics of American identity that reached its apotheosis during the post–Cold War decline of high colonialism.<sup>8</sup>

As Penny Von Eschen and Amy Beal, among others, have shown, American musical subjects and Americanist cultural politics are articulated far beyond America’s shores, even when no “Americans” are present.<sup>9</sup> Because “American life” and “American musical history” happen all over the world, those very notions inevitably become bound up with new and trenchant ques-

6. See Lipsitz, “The Long Fetch of History; or, Why Music Matters,” vii–xxv.

7. Here, the Spanish term refers not so much to its more literal usage as “mixing of races and/or cultures” but to more recent transformations of the word that address theoretical implications of identity formation under postmodernity and postcolonial -scapes.

8. The anecdote goes like this: “Once in Amsterdam, a Dutch musician said to me, ‘It must be very difficult for you in America to write music, for you are so far away from the centers of tradition.’ I had to say, ‘It must be very difficult for you in Europe to write music, for you are so close to the centers of tradition.’” Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, 73.

9. See Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*; and Beal, *New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany from the Zero Hour to Reunification*.

tions about American identity that musical scholars are in a unique position to pursue. Borrowing from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, perhaps we could use these questions to animate a *nomadic* Americanist musicology that challenges political tendencies toward “fixed paths in well-defined directions, which restrict speed, regulate circulation, relativize movement, and measure in detail the relative movements of subjects and objects.”<sup>10</sup> Multilingualism would become a given, with the new Americanists not only pursuing familiarity with the major and “minor” languages of the regions they address, but taking a leading activist role in redefining American identity as inherently multilingual, a feature of so many world cultures.

Perhaps hip-hop studies will point the way. Reaching into areas of the world where earlier forms of Western music—classical, jazz, rock—have made few inroads, hip-hop’s African Americanist sonic tropes, rhythmic cadences, and sampling practices are regularly transformed into symbols of the aspirations of the widest array of cultures, including views critical of the United States itself. Just pop over to YouTube and have a listen to Tunisian rapper El General’s Dre-inflected Arabic rhyming couplets:

Our young men adore all that Allah has forbidden  
 They liked Marilyn Manson  
 And have forgotten about the Quds and Baghdad.  
 [. . .]  
 Allahu Akbar! The banner of Islam always comes first!  
 Allahu Akbar! Shahid, nothing but death can stop me!<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, one of the major international staging grounds for American musical identity is electronic media, and since the U.S. is still the country with the most extensive and influential mediascape, we can pursue, as researchers such as Ana Maria Ochoa are doing, an (ethno)musicology of media in the Americas that theorizes the outcomes emerging from this superstructure. In the realm of media, musicologists, computational theorists, and economists could make common cause, joining organizational studies researchers such as Damon J. Phillips in excavating hidden relationships among music creation, recording, consumption, and distribution.<sup>12</sup>

10. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 385–86.

11. Nahda Productions, “(Translated) ‘Allahuakbar’ Song of the Tunisian Revolution by Tunisian Muslim Youth,” <http://nahdaproductions.org/in-focus/current-affairs/item/455-translated-allahuakbar-song-of-the-tunisian-revolution-by-tunisian-muslim-youth> (accessed 1 May 2011). The Norwegian leftist rap group Gatas Parlament (“People’s Parliament”) produced a video featuring a mock assassination of U.S. President George W. Bush, centering on a website, “killhim.nu.” The video’s “weather reporter” rapped in front of a chroma-keyed litany of U.S. incursions into Southeast Asia, Central and South America, and the Middle East, concluding that the country was built on “armed robbery.” See Gatas Parlament, “Antiamerikansk dans,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmKPJT6XbCE> (accessed 25 August 2011).

12. See Ochoa, *Músicas locales en tiempos de globalización*; and Phillips and Owens, “Incumbents, Innovation, and Competence: The Emergence of Recorded Jazz, 1920 to 1929.”

And this leads me to a somewhat lengthy coda:

It strikes me that in recent years, and in marked contrast to previous eras, the work of many of the best-known American public intellectuals of our time seems distanced from musical considerations. The work of the late Edward Said presented a major exception that nonetheless seemed to prove the rule of music's marginalization and devaluation in the public sphere, where it is somehow assumed (or at least this is the impression gained from "mainstream elite" periodicals—the *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, and even the *New Yorker*) that music (and in particular, new music) has little to teach us about the critical issues of our time.

Most recently, my thoughts in this area were piqued by an encounter with the enormously successful, Pulitzer Prize-winning book by *New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century*. I admit that as I began reading I had one of the more influential musings on noise in the back of my mind, Jacques Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Like Ross, Attali was also listening closely to the twentieth century, and both authors occupy a popular and public niche; one can find Attali's books in a well-stocked Parisian news kiosk.

But that is where the similarities end; in the Ross text, classical music, even in the U.S. context, appears still as something of a cultural given, and nothing that happened in the twentieth century, musical or otherwise, has disturbed that. I began reading the text as both chronicle and example of how cultural capital is created, invested, and exchanged, in dialogue with a chapter from a somehow less popular book, Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*: "[T]he text becomes a cultural weapon . . . a social hierarchization seeks to make the reader conform to the 'information' distributed by an elite (or semi-elite)" (171–72).

In contrast, Attali's version of the twentieth century, from a French public intellectual who was "so close to the centers of tradition," recognizes music as both carrier and predictor of potent transformations of political, cultural, and social landscapes. Moreover, in recent years Americanist musicology has created its own version of the turn from political history to social and cultural history. In that vein, our role as historians would be to fold music into the vast sweep of American historiography. The frontier, the maverick, democracy, exceptionalism, human rights, class, race, sexuality, as well as the peculiar workings-out of mobility in the U.S. context—these questions are our questions, as musically informed historians such as George Lipsitz, David Noble, Lawrence Levine, and Robin D. G. Kelley have made common cause with musicologists in demonstrating. We need to be able to account for the sonic forms and symbols new American musics might assume, as well as what, if anything, these sounds might be telling us about U.S. postindustrial society, its subjectivity, its ethics, and its humanity, now that the American Century has been superseded by a U.S. identity as a node in a postcolonial, globalized world-network.

*The Rest is Noise* isn't about jazz, although jazz does make a cameo appearance in the book's recounting of a very unstable moment in American musical

history, when there was still a possibility that African American music might form the basis for a new American classical music that could emancipate itself from European models. According to Carol J. Oja (briefly quoted in Ross), European composers visiting the United States in the 1920s—Ravel, Stravinsky, Milhaud—were “eager to hear jazz, which for them represented the core of American music.”<sup>13</sup> On the other side of the aisle, Alain Locke, the great Harlem Renaissance philosopher, declared in 1936 that “Certainly for the last fifty years, the Negro has been the main source of America’s popular music, and promises, as we shall see, to become one of the main sources of America’s serious or classical music, at least that part which strives to be natively American and not derivative of European types of music.”<sup>14</sup>

In the end, that didn’t happen. Instead, American classical music moved toward the construction of a usable past designed to elicit respect from the mavens of European high culture. Here, Oja sees a paradox embedded in a thesis to which Locke apparently also subscribed: namely, that “American modernism must conform to long-established European standards at the same time as it found its own distinctive manifestations.”<sup>15</sup> So it is with *The Rest is Noise*, even as it draws sustenance from a subset of the innovative historiographies pioneered by scholars such as Wilfrid Mellers and Richard Crawford, who unearthed an American musical diversity that challenged the notions of American musicocultural identity then on offer. Perhaps musicology could encourage more interventions from outside the field—Lipsitz, Kelley, Von Eschen, Joseph Roach,—and even from outside academia, as with Ned Sublette, an ardent advocate of the multilingual version of the circum-Atlanticism identified by Paul Gilroy.<sup>16</sup>

And as for noise, Jon Cruz’s archaeoacoustic account of how nineteenth-century slave owners saw slave music as “noise—that is, as strange, unfathomable, and incomprehensible”<sup>17</sup> leads him to observe that noise is “sound out of order . . . [it] spills out of, or flows over, the preferred channels . . . out of place, resistant to capture.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, this noisy, nomadic dimension in American identity has formed a crucial reason why we are still, in Charles Hiroshi Garrett’s memorable phrase, “struggling to define a nation.”<sup>19</sup> In that light, perhaps nomadic noise could become both embodiment of and guiding metaphor for a new Americanist musicology as it moves decisively toward self-transformation.

13. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s*, 295.

14. Locke, *The Negro and His Music: Negro Art; Past and Present*, 2.

15. Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 305.

16. Sublette, *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square*.

17. Cruz, *Culture on the Margins: The Black Spiritual and the Rise of American Cultural Interpretation*, 43.

18. *Ibid.*, 47–48.

19. Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century*.



## Rethinking Social Class and American Music

GAYLE SHERWOOD MAGEE

Historical studies in American music have lagged behind other disciplines in investigating the implications of social class, which the sociologist Dalton Conley recently dubbed “that dirty word of American society.”<sup>20</sup> Given the economic upheavals since 2008, it should come as no surprise that literally dozens of scholarly publications on class have appeared recently in the fields of, among others, American history, sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, education, and art history.<sup>21</sup> Yet, despite musicological studies of social class in British and European music,<sup>22</sup> specifically class-informed studies of American music remain relatively rare, a lacuna intimately tied to the conjoined strategies of exceptionalism and advocacy that have characterized the field in the past. As race and gender studies in American music have flourished over the past several decades, so might the exploration of social class and its explicit and implicit connections to musical creation, performance, and dissemination play a central role in future scholarship.

By class, I mean principally the very real socioeconomic conditions into which Americans are born, and which determine to some extent their privileges, opportunities, and limitations in life—an idea, in anthropologist Sherry Ortner’s words, “that Americans probably dislike more than any other proposition about social opportunity in America.”<sup>23</sup> I would argue that this unpopularity extends to academe and that it has minimized frank discussions of social class in scholarly discourse concerning American history and culture, including in musicology.<sup>24</sup> Instead, scholarship has tended to subsume class issues within the dominant discourses on race, ethnicity, and gender; to focus on class identity as a means of defining primarily “white” musical practices; or to ignore class altogether.

Part of the discomfort in dealing with class stems from the deep-rooted myth of America as a classless society, a foundational tenet of U.S. exceptionalism. As social historian Joyce Appleby notes, exceptionalism represents

20. Conley, *Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America*, 1.

21. A sample of titles demonstrates the historical range of current class-based scholarship: Hale, *A Nation of Outsiders: How the White Middle Class Fell in Love with Rebellion in Postwar America*; Zhao, *The New Chinese America: Class, Economy, and Social Hierarchy*; Moore, *Cow Boys and Cattle Men: Class and Masculinities on the Texas Frontier, 1865–1900*; and Middleton and Smith, *Class Matters: Early North America and the Atlantic World*.

22. Recent examples include Bashford, “Historiography and Invisible Musics: Domestic Chamber Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain”; and Pacheco and Griffiths, “Beyond Church and Court: City Musicians and Music in Renaissance Valladolid.”

23. Ortner, “Identities: The Hidden Life of Class,” 13.

24. Comparatively rare class-based approaches to American music history include insightful work by Broyles, “Music and Class Structure in Antebellum Boston”; and Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World*.

"America's peculiar form of Eurocentrism" through implicit and explicit comparisons to European society.<sup>25</sup> In musicology, the exceptionalist approach was inevitable, admirable, and fruitful in the 1960s through the 1980s, and led, in several pioneering publications by Gilbert Chase, H. Wiley Hitchcock, and Charles Hamm among others, to the serious scholarly treatment of American "vernacular" musics previously excluded from the Eurocentric canon.<sup>26</sup>

But while advocacy for non-elite musical traditions often engaged implicitly with issues of social class, in Charles Hiroshi Garrett's words, "such treatments downplay[ed] the sociocultural tensions that have shaped music making in the United States . . . and the divergent and contradictory perspectives that constitute the musical nation."<sup>27</sup> Moreover, upholding the exceptionalist approach, including the "classless society" myth, continues the subaltern status that defines American music studies in perennial opposition to its perceived oppressor. Recovering and recognizing genuine class diversity sheds new light on musical practice historically and contemporaneously, and on little known and canonic works alike, as the following examples will suggest.

My first example considers how greater class-consciousness might further illuminate an indisputably canonic American work, Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1935). Many scholars have approached *Porgy and Bess* through the lens of race and ethnicity, and in so doing have greatly advanced our understanding of the composition. Yet a specifically class-focused study could explore multiple new dimensions of this work: highlighting the networks of meaning in the plot's tensions between the static working-class community of Catfish Row and the outsiders who threaten class destabilization and downward mobility; exploring the class diversity of the original production's creators, from the highly educated, upper-middle-class leads, to the novella's (and later play's) upper-class writer and its class-mobile composer; or interrogating the varied, often charged reception by upper-class audiences and critics. That all of these class disparities relate to a work invoking "opera"—the genre that might best exemplify class consciousness and contestation in the United States, as Katherine K. Preston and Karen Ahlquist have proposed—emphasizes the centrality of class to this work.<sup>28</sup>

A second group of examples suggests how new approaches to class may revise our understanding of musical performance, education, composition, transmission, and publication in antebellum America. In an introduction to a symposium on class published in the *Journal of the Early Republic* in 2005, historian Gary J. Kornblith stated that "*class is back* in the study of late

25. Appleby, "Recovering America's Historic Diversity: Beyond Exceptionalism," 25.

26. Chase, *America's Music, from the Pilgrims to the Present*; Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction*; and Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America*.

27. Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation*, 8.

28. See, for example, Preston, *Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825–60*; and Ahlquist, *Democracy at the Opera: Music, Theater, and Culture in New York City, 1815–60*.

eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American history.”<sup>29</sup> Several of the symposium’s participants offered work that revises previous thinking on class diversity in post-Revolutionary-War America, with clear implications for the study of music history. For example, Andrew M. Schocket’s research vividly portrays “the fault lines of the economy, of politics, of culture, and of community during a period when those distinctions [were] being transformed from a colonial world of ‘sorts’—best, middling, and lower—into a modern, industrial world of class.”<sup>30</sup> How might musicologists connect Schocket’s discussion of the emergence of corporate banking, organized private capital, and government influence with the expansion of music publishing, the advent of music-based copyright laws, and the effects of such historical moments on the direction of hymnody?

Seth Rockman, in the same volume, proposed a new framework for understanding the power structure of early capitalism, by considering class “from a top-down vantage—as the constraints upon the choices and the limits upon the opportunities available to working people in the early republic.”<sup>31</sup> Many of those limits involved education and literacy (including music literacy), issues that determine precise documentation of musical performance and repertoire. Yet, as Rockman has shown elsewhere, it is possible to glimpse the daily lives of the working poor in early America by accessing previously ignored or underutilized primary sources.<sup>32</sup> Are there as yet undiscovered documents that will reveal the lost soundtrack of poverty-level groups from this era? Similarly, Jennifer Goloboy traces the adoption of middle-class values by lower-middle- and working-class Americans in the early nineteenth century, including through music and dance lessons, in a conscious effort to obtain the American ideal of upward class mobility.<sup>33</sup> Might Goloboy’s study offer historical detail concerning music teaching, musical instruments, and the imported European traditions embraced by lower income populations that longed to, but in many cases never achieved, middle-class status?

Since scholars from diverse class backgrounds may be more conscious of class identity, and may ask fresh, provocative questions concerning entitlement and privilege, one of the major obstacles to a more class-conscious approach to American music history is “the academy’s prevalent classism,” in the words of Kenneth Oldfield and Richard Greggory Johnson III. Such classism is both cause and effect of “people of poverty and working class . . . origin [being] significantly underrepresented in the professoriate.”<sup>34</sup> And, as Peter Schmidt

29. Kornblith, “Introduction to the Symposium on Class in the Early Republic,” 523 (italics in original).

30. Schocket, “Thinking about Elites in the Early Republic,” 555.

31. Rockman, “Class and the History of Working People in the Early Republic,” 532.

32. See Rockman’s book-length study *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* for a compelling study of the diverse working class in antebellum Baltimore.

33. Goloboy, “The Early American Middle Class.”

34. Oldfield and Johnson III, *Resilience: Queer Professors from the Working Class*, 2 (“prevalent classism”) and 1 (“people of poverty”).

writes, even though “social class plays a substantial role in determining who obtains, and succeeds in, faculty positions . . . for the most part, issues of class are largely ignored in the scholarly literature of the professoriate.”<sup>35</sup>

Scholarly inquiries concerning class require an awareness of how class affects decision making at every level. To what extent do class backgrounds influence a budding scholar’s interest in musicology, choice of field, and graduate educational opportunities? Is the field of American music studies any more (or less) attractive to or supportive of scholars from working class and poverty backgrounds? How do “domestic” Americanists fare in conference submissions, competitive fellowships and awards, and on the job market in comparison with their counterparts whose projects involve overseas residencies and may require more financial resources? Viewed from another perspective, has the domestic focus of much American music scholarship prevented a more wide-ranging engagement with topics outside of fixed geopolitical borders—including Canadian music, Latin American musics from outside the United States, and the American diasporas in Europe, Africa, or Asia? I do not pose these as rhetorical questions, nor do I have the data to answer them: instead, they are offered as a first attempt to spur discussion concerning the underlying value systems operating not only in American music studies but also in the larger musicological field.

Just as class-based scholarship will advance the study of American music by recontextualizing the “dirty word” of class, so too can this work be undertaken only in tandem with the conscious fostering of class-based diversity through mentoring, pedagogy, and greater institutional provisions. Without such support, true class diversity will remain elusive in Americanist musicology as well as the broader academic field, and class-diverse voices will be absent from our classrooms, from our conferences, and from the pages of our most respected journals.

## American Music in Times of Postnationality

ALEJANDRO L. MADRID

The notion of “American music” or any “national music” reflects how people at a given historical moment choose to understand the nation-state in which that music is produced; as such, national musics are instruments in the solidification and transmission of such an understanding. Music’s personal and collective emotional powers are also very influential when it comes to reimagining the nation-state in the tense balance between nationalist discourse and everyday experience.

35. Schmidt, “Professors from the Working Class Credit Their Rise to Rock—and Agent Scully.”

The white-black racial dichotomy that has dominated the U.S. national imagination for most of the country's history has been central in defining the idea of "American music" and, thereby, in shaping musicology as a discipline in the United States during the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In light of this racial discourse, we can read the academic validation of jazz, for example, not only as a triumph for broadening the curriculum but also as a sign of the disturbing ethnic imaginary that sees the United States as a black-and-white nation. Today, with all the talk about multiculturalism in the academy, one would think that music scholars would have left behind the impulses and dynamics that brought the bifurcation of the discipline into musicology and ethnomusicology in the 1950s, or that led to founding the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) as a viable disciplinary alternative in the 1980s. However, one can peruse nearly any AMS-L listserv discussion that touches on popular music to find evidence that elitist criteria are still alive and ready to condemn its aesthetic "inferiority."

Crisis, however, now envelops the very project of nation building that served as the ideological foundation for the development of musicology. We live in an age of postnationality, understood not as the collapse of the nation-state as a unit of political organization, but rather as the collapse of a very specific understanding of the nation-state.<sup>36</sup> The idea cultivated by politicians and ideologues of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—that is, of a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant country trying to come to terms with its terrible past of slavery by incorporating African Americans into the national fantasy—is no longer a feasible imaginary. The election of a mixed-race president—who is perceived as black but whose story does not comply with the country's mainstream narrative about African Americans—and the 2006 massive pro-immigration marches largely led by Latinos, are just two examples of how current demographics have changed the face of the country. Particularly relevant is the presence of Latinos as the nation's largest minority, which renders visible those who have long remained marginal in the dichotomic discourse of the U.S. nation-state.<sup>37</sup>

The beginning of the twenty-first century has brought the crisis of two models of organization that are relevant to discussing the place of American music in today's academy. First, democracy has exposed a political crisis, that of the traditional model of nationalism to which many U.S. conservatives des-

36. I wish to thank the many friends and colleagues who, for years, have listened to my concerns and disappointments with musicology as a disciplinary field. I am also especially indebted to Arved Ashby, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, Fred Maus, and Carol J. Oja for their editorial and critical comments on this essay. At the same time, I remind the reader that all polemics, oversights, and errors are my own.

See Corona and Madrid, "Introduction: The Postnational Turn in Music Scholarship and Music Marketing," 3–8.

37. The 2010 U.S. Census reported Latinos to be 16.3 percent of the country's total population; making them the largest minority, followed by African Americans at 12.6 percent. See Humes, Jones, and Ramirez, *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010*.

perately try to cling. Second, democracy has also exposed an aesthetic and educational crisis, that of the model of music in higher education and the elitist canon on which it is based. In response to this changing cultural landscape, many academics have focused on the expansion of the canon in an attempt to make it “more inclusive.” In his recent updates of Grout and Palisca’s classic *A History of Western Music* (2006 and 2010), Peter Burkholder pays particular attention to the importance of musics from the Americas in the development of learned European music traditions; these trans-Atlantic connections represent salient examples of a novel, vaguely postcolonial approach to music history. Burkholder’s understanding of European and American musics as “a single transatlantic tradition within which local, national, and regional traditions still play a role”<sup>38</sup> challenges Eurocentric visions of music history and successfully responds to contemporary calls for multicultural inclusiveness in the United States. Similarly, Richard Taruskin’s monumental *The Oxford History of Western Music* (2005), “[an] account of the rise of our reigning narratives” about learned European music and the ideologies these narratives stand for, could be interpreted as a democratic critique that takes into account how musical meaning is produced in reception.<sup>39</sup> These revisionist projects are two prominent efforts to rethink music academia from within, at a moment when both the model of music in U.S. higher education, and the twentieth-century nationalist model of the U.S. nation-state have come into question. Nevertheless, both reformist projects fail to address a more fundamental aspect of the problem: that the model upon which the higher education music system in the U.S. is based on is itself in crisis.

The U.S. higher education music system has become too comfortable with the reproduction of formulas that aspire to ensure its own replication. When a system occupies itself with reproducing a given set of aesthetic values (absolute music, organicism, harmonic complexity, the idea of musical genius, teleology, etc.) and their embodiment in a given musical repertoire (the European learned music tradition), it becomes more a matter of propaganda than a project in critical thinking. Nearly all music departments in the U.S. serve in fact as music “conservatories,” programs for the study and reproduction of the values of the European learned music tradition, invested in “conserving” that tradition regardless of the lack of mention of Europe in their names.<sup>40</sup> With very few exceptions, they are not programs for the study of music in the amplest sense of the term, nor are they programs for the study of sound, its

38. Burkholder, “Music of the Americas and Historical Narratives,” 419.

39. Taruskin, “Introduction: The History of What?,” xxiii. I use the term “learned European music” instead of “classical music” or “Western art music” to emphasize its character as an educated, elitist tradition as well as to avoid some of the implications of the latter terms. I believe they inadvertently neglect other “classical music” traditions and that other musical repertoires from the Western world could also be considered art music.

40. In these programs, ethnomusicology has often been accepted more as a token of multiculturalism than as an integral part of the academic agenda.

meaning, and its organization within specific cultural and social contexts. Thus, the conservatory setting, with its largely anti-intellectual vocation, plays a central role in the canonic fixation and lack of internal critique of musicology. Under these circumstances, the answer to the crises of the nation-state and the current music education model does not lie in the expansion of the canon in order to include token courses on “ethnic” or popular musics; instead, it is a matter of acknowledging the epistemological change the discipline should go through in order to become relevant to larger intellectual inquiries in the humanities and the social sciences. Rather than expanding the current Western music canon with a more multiculturally defined American music repertory (which would still reinforce national boundaries and nationalist ideologies), the academic study of American music can become part of a project to rethink the U.S. nation-state and U.S. citizenship from a postnational frame of mind. Instead of perpetuating the values of a musical canon in crisis, the study of American music should help us transform our understanding of ourselves as Americans.

An example that clearly illustrates the crisis of the U.S. nationalist discourse is the dissonance between the almost schizophrenic marginality of Latin American and Latino culture within this discourse, and its centrality in U.S. everyday economic and even political life. The absence of Latin American and Latino music in most surveys of American music reflects the invisibility of this culture within U.S. mainstream discourse. Instead of pouring Latin American and Latino musical practices into an American music canon that would continue feeding the fantasy of a “melting pot” (a multicultural one this time), I would argue for new approaches in our research, teaching, curriculum, and discussion of American music that recognize the historically transnational musical flows between the U.S. and Latin America—an approach that ultimately aims at dismantling the myth of U.S. exceptionalism. Such a project would study what is present and what is absent in the discourse about American music and identify such selectivity as a performative force that helps create these fantasies about the nation-state in the first place. Studying American music from this perspective would align music scholarship with a larger intellectual project against the continued cultural support of U.S. exceptionalism and in favor of a cosmopolitan notion of U.S. identity.

In times of postnationality, true critical thinking is required to deconstruct the nationalist and colonialist values that give meaning to our higher-education music system and that the system itself reproduces. Cultural Studies programs are already offering the kinds of courses that take such a critical stance.<sup>41</sup> It seems to me that many of today’s most interesting discussions about “classical” music come from these programs precisely because they question the very

41. For example Barry Shank’s work on American music at the Comparative Cultural Studies Department of the Ohio State University or Tia DeNora’s work on music and everyday life at the Sociology and Philosophy Department of the University of Exeter.

values that music departments and conservatories refuse to shake.<sup>42</sup> This situation allows cultural theorists to look at music and ask questions relevant to the humanities and social sciences that musicologists may choose to avoid or, in the worst cases, do not recognize as significant.

How could this epistemological change take place in the discipline? One option would be for musicologists to start migrating to nonmusic programs and establish critical intellectual conversations beyond the boundaries of the discipline and beyond the constraints of the conservatory mindset. In order for this to happen, musicologists need to make their research questions relevant to larger intellectual dialogues. Whether it is by embracing the attitude of performance studies, as I have suggested elsewhere, or by other means—in order to become more relevant to a wider intellectual community, musicology should intensify its shift of focus from “what music is” to “what happens when music happens.”<sup>43</sup> I believe that such a shift ultimately advocates for an approach to the study of American music that, by recognizing the unique dynamics of current demographic shifts in the country, makes music scholarship relevant to a variety of contemporary intellectual, public, and political debates about citizenship and the meaning of the nation-state in times of postnationality.

## U.S. Music Studies in a “Moment of Danger”

SHERRIE TUCKER

As a scholar who studies U.S. music from within the context of an American studies department, I offer my remarks as a reflection on the historical relationships of the study of U.S. music to a cluster of departments, programs, and centers that welcomed our work before music departments were ready. U.S. music studies emerged not from a single department or discipline, but through connections made by passionate and determined bridge-builders who—out of necessity—forged routes between music, ethnic studies, women’s studies, African American studies, and American studies, among others. Although there are many signs that we have reached an era of disciplinary safety for studying music of the United States within music departments, this moment of acceptance is also a “moment of danger.” The very programs, centers, and departments that brought U.S. music studies to this point are currently under attack.

42. See for example Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum*; Neufeld, “Living the Work: Meditations on a Lark”; Gaztambide-Fernández, “Wherefore the Musicians?”; Suisman, *Selling Sounds: The Commercial Revolution in American Music*; Shank, “Productive Orientalisms: Imagining Noise and Silence across the Pacific, 1957–1967”; and DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792–1803*.

43. See Madrid, “Why Music and Performance Studies? Why Now? An Introduction to the Special Issue.”



In these times of budgetary insecurity, it is crucial to recall the five-month Third World Strike at San Francisco State University in 1968 that mobilized, and was part of, a larger movement in which students, faculty, and staff risked degrees, jobs, and careers because it was *that important* to infuse the academy with hitherto marginalized perspectives, theories, experiences, histories, and insights. The invigorating shake-up that awoke the critical potential, interdisciplinary possibilities, and social relevance of the university in the 1960s and 1970s transformed American studies and facilitated much American music scholarship of those years. The legacy of U.S. music studies is entwined with programs underwritten by the student movement, the civil rights and Black Power movements, the women's movement, La Raza movement, and women-of-color political formations. Forty years later, however, these programs are targeted for cuts in tandem with sharp escalations in anti-immigrant and anti-worker legislation, assaults on women's rights and reproductive freedom, and other infringements of social justice.

The title of my essay is borrowed from George Lipsitz, one of our most influential and socially engaged interdisciplinary scholars. In *American Studies in a Moment of Danger* (2001), Lipsitz maps a history of the discipline as an ongoing interrelationship between academic methods and grass-roots movements. American studies, writes Lipsitz, is "built on the best of both sides, grounding itself in the study of concrete cultural practices, extending the definition of culture to the broadest possible contexts of cultural production and reception, recognizing the role played by national histories and traditions in cultural contestation, and understanding that struggles over meaning are inevitably struggles over resources" (100). We stand to lose that tradition of socially engaged scholarship and activism if we allow the erasure of links between U.S. music studies, ethnic studies, and other programs that were brought into the academy through collective advocacy.

A chilling reminder that struggles over cultural meaning can become struggles over resources arrived with the passage of Arizona's "anti-ethnic studies" bill, HB 2281, which became law on 31 December 2010. It bans classes that "are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group" or "advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals."<sup>44</sup> The bill targeted the Tucson Unified School District's program in Mexican American Studies (K–12), but it extends to all ethnic studies courses throughout the state, including those in universities. HB 2281 followed closely on the heels of SB 1070, which protects racial profilers but not those being profiled; the bill essentially mandated racial profiling, in its criminalizing of "being in Arizona without papers."<sup>45</sup> According to a report for *La Prensa*, "Latinos not only run the risk of being considered suspicious on the streets of Arizona; now they are

44. Rowley, "Ariz. Governor Signs Bill Banning Ethnic Studies Programs."

45. "Arizona Apartheid."

also suspected in that state's school books."<sup>46</sup> This pairing of impulses—the forced treatment of all people as abstract individuals without regard to ethnicity, with the policing of people according to perceived ethnicity on a hierarchical grid of legitimacy—is, as Gary Okihiro writes, “as old as the field of ethnic studies.”<sup>47</sup> Ethnic studies scholarship has yielded powerful analytical tools and methods for studying these contradictions, knowledge that is crucial to the survival of marginalized groups. Kenneth P. Montiero observes that Arizona's HB 2281 is based on an assumption that everyone is being treated equally in the United States and that ethnic studies tips the balance, ignoring the role that ethnic studies has played in fighting for social justice.<sup>48</sup> To forget how ethnic studies has facilitated pathways for scholarship on music in the United States is to forget the relationship between U.S. music studies and social justice movements.

While entering the academy under different historical conditions than ethnic studies, American Studies departments were transformed by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Sadly, the curtain has fallen recently on some of its most highly regarded programs. In 2010, the American Studies program at Michigan State University was suddenly and unexpectedly eliminated, as were programs at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and the University of Missouri, Kansas City. The program at the University of Iowa was identified for possible elimination or restructuring, which has, for now, resulted in consolidating it with other threatened programs—Sports Studies and Indigenous and Native American Studies.<sup>49</sup> At University of California, Santa Cruz, the American Studies program has disbanded, and Community Studies has been wiped out. Also rumored to be threatened are Feminist Studies and the interdisciplinary History of Consciousness program (where I wrote my dissertation on “all-girl” jazz and swing bands of the 1940s—a project I believe could not have been pursued in most music departments in the 1990s).

Prominent music scholars have been among those affected by these closures. Former director of American Studies at Michigan State, David W. Stowe, who has published on swing, sacred music, and Christian rock, explains that the program has been placed on moratorium and can no longer admit new graduate students.<sup>50</sup> Faculty were not fired but rather shifted into the nearest appropriate department; this extremely well-regarded program—home of the *Journal of Popular Culture*—will lose its graduate students and all connected teaching, funding, mentoring, and employment opportunities. Eric Porter, former chair of American Studies at University of California, Santa

46. “¡Otra más de Arizona! / Another One in Arizona!”

47. Okihiro, “The Future of Ethnic Studies: The Field Is Under Assault from Without and Within.”

48. Monteiro, “Who Gets to Define Ethnic Studies? Arizona's New Law Represents a One-Sided View.

49. Kim Marra, e-mail to author, 15 March 2011.

50. Stowe, e-mail to author, 5 March 2011.

Cruz, is also a music scholar, whose work situates jazz musicians in African American intellectual history. Porter reflects, "I think it's fair to say that as interdisciplinary programs go into decline, as faculty get stretched thin and some leave institutions like UCSC, the possibilities for putting together dynamic dissertation committees of energized people bringing critical gender, race, postcolonial, and related approaches to music declines."<sup>51</sup>

Current attacks on ethnic studies and American studies are related to broader budgetary crises affecting our universities, but they are not wholly attributable to economic concerns. Certainly, Arizona's SB 2281 is not intended as a cost-saving measure, nor is it an attempt to raise academic standards. On the contrary, some programs under fire have been shown to raise the academic performance of students and decrease dropout rates.<sup>52</sup> This bill instead represents a politicized attack over issues such as legitimacy, identity, canonicity, nationhood, and the definition of U.S. culture, and it calls out for the same kind of combination of scholarship and activism that led to the introduction of ethnic studies in the first place. As such programs are targeted by institutional restructuring, how will scholars in music departments participate in these fights? How might we sustain living memory of our linkages across programs, and of their relationships to social struggles?

What would U.S. music studies look like today, for example, if in the 1960s a young African American scholar of Renaissance music had not proposed teaching a course in Black music and become "furious" at the failure of most of her music department colleagues to comprehend her proposal?<sup>53</sup> At this juncture, Eileen Southern embarked on a journey familiar to anyone who has conducted serious research on topics deemed "illegitimate." This confluence of social struggle and academic research resulted in her still indispensable *Music of Black Americans: A History* (1971), followed by her launching the journal, *The Black Perspective in Music*, propelling a field, as Samuel Floyd Jr. explains, and inspiring a "core of black-music scholars."<sup>54</sup> Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr. notes the significance of Southern's use of the word "Black" in her scholarly publications of the early 1970s, a word that had been "radicalized" in that "auspicious historical moment."<sup>55</sup> Southern helped bring into the academy both ideas and scholars that had been previously marginalized. Black studies has produced vital theories and methods for our understanding of African American music and culture, approaches that have interrupted con-

51. Porter, e-mail to author, 5 March 2011.

52. According to *El Chicano Weekly*, the programs in Ethnic Studies and Mexican American Studies at the Tucson Unified School District have decreased dropout rates to 2.5 percent, improved standardized test scores, and helped encourage sixty-six of these students to attend college. Mendoza, "UCR Hosts Embattled Arizona Teachers."

53. Floyd Jr., "Eileen Jackson Southern: Quiet Revolutionary," 6–7.

54. Ibid.

55. Ramsey Jr., "Cosmopolitan or Provincial? Ideology in Early Black Music Historiography, 1867–1940," 11.

structions of legitimacy and exclusion while acknowledging power relations and inequalities—a tradition of knowledge production that stands to suffer if ethnic studies continues to be dismantled.

Wherever their disciplinary home, many scholars studying music of the United States continue to produce critical, interdisciplinary, socially engaged work, often grounding their research across at least two fields of study. Ethnomusicologist Deborah Wong, for example, explicitly situates *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music* (2004) not just as explorations of “ethnic music,” but as studies of complex, shifting identities, communities, and meaning-making through music within an ethnic studies framework, while simultaneously drawing on approaches to identity and music from performance studies, feminist theory, and theories of race and ethnicity. As a result of this multifaceted approach, Wong’s scholarship does not attempt to construct an object called “Asian American music,” but explores many different kinds of music production by a broad range of Asian Americans who identify in many different ways (p. 13).

If music departments are turning out to be safer places to hang our hats than American studies, ethnic studies, and other interdisciplinary programs, it could be that legislators and state budget committees believe that music departments are less critical, less socially engaged, less politically aware, more traditional, more disciplinary, and more disconnected from those “rogue” areas that are perceived as academic-based threats. If this is to be one of those “moments of possibility” that yield the kernel of hope in Lipsitz’s “moments of danger,” then this is a moment when music scholars must insist on our interdisciplinary linkages. Johnella Butler was not referring specifically to the study of U.S. music, but she could have been when she wrote, “[as] an interdisciplinary field of study, Ethnic Studies encompasses the content of the humanities and social sciences while paradoxically being excluded from these fields. But as a matrix, Ethnic Studies provides the situation within which (and through association with) the humanities and social sciences may realize the potential of their educational missions.”<sup>56</sup>

As a “matrix,” ethnic studies has played a large role in providing the “situations” through which U.S. music studies has flourished. It is one reason why so many of us, inside and outside of music departments, know one another’s work, collaborate, and ferret out the routes to one other’s domains through corridors designed with the assumption that we would never seek one other’s fellowship. I hope the current state of U.S. music studies is one in which we will continue to recognize and sustain these linkages. Music departments are not immune to business-model restructuring trends. There will be moments when the safer choice may seem to call for us to forget the contributions of bridge-crossing between music departments and programs, centers, and

56. Butler, “Ethnic Studies as a Matrix for the Humanities, the Social Sciences, and the Common Good,” 19.

departments grounded in social justice movements. That inevitable temptation is what I see as our current moment of danger. My hope for U.S. music studies is that we will use this moment to reaffirm our commitment to socially engaged interdisciplinary networks. I hope we will remember to teach our students the passageways that connect us and how to find new ones, and never forget what it took to get us to the crossroads where we stand today.

## File Under: American Spaces

ROBERT FINK

The historical and its consequences, the “diachronic,” the “etymology” of locations in the sense of what happened at a particular spot or place and thereby changed it—all of this becomes inscribed in space. . . . Yet this space is always, now and formerly, a *present* space, given as an immediate whole, complete with its associations and connections in their actuality.<sup>57</sup>

Older cultural theory in many ways stressed *time*, suggesting that cultural traditions were handed down from generation to generation. New cultural theory, as it is developing in geography, cultural studies and many allied disciplines, stresses *space*, understanding culture to be constituted through space and *as* a space.<sup>58</sup>

### Space versus time

It may be that a subtle epistemic shift is, slowly but steadily, transforming the practice of North American musicology. *Time*, the original structuring principle of musicological inquiry, is making room for a new organizing framework based on the phenomenology of *space*. It may even be that this perspectival shift, bringing musicology more in line with other disciplines of cultural study, is related to the rise of American music as a central preoccupation of North American musicologists.

For an older generation of musicologists, even those who ultimately chose to specialize in music of the Americas, the initial impulse to enter the field often came from love of music much more firmly rooted in imagined historical time than in experienced social space. The fundamental issues of European “classical” music seemed, for this generation, temporal: not only did the works move purposively through subjective time as we listened, they demanded to be located in art-historical time as we studied. Our experience of music in place, the “where” rather than the “when,” generated less interest. Although the organization of virtual sonic spaces was subjected to interpretive scrutiny

57. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 37.

58. Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*, 63.

(we studied musical form as a representation of space), music as a spatial practice, the way it occupies real places and produces socially lived spaces, remained relatively inscrutable.<sup>59</sup>

This temporal orientation to musicology never served “American music” well. North America has a well-documented music history, of course, but—and I speak in shorthand here, so forgive me, heirs of Oscar Sonneck—we just don’t have as much of it as Europe has. Nor do narratives of American music easily escape from the strong pull of the center–periphery dialectic, the colonialist logic that reads the “America” in American music as a mark of the subaltern. Great music is supposed to be not only timeless, but placeless; thus it is still unusual, even halfway across the world in Los Angeles, to identify oneself as a scholar of “European” classical music.

But if we decenter the Euro-canon and start from the peripheral position of American music, quite different habits of mind emerge. For North American scholars, it has become by now second nature to assume that key features of American music can and should be mapped onto the distinctive cultural geographies of colonial, industrial, and post-industrial North-Central-South America. Perhaps space seems primal to those of us in the Americas because we have so *much* of it, and because the fundamentally federalist dialectic of pan-American identity pits far-flung regions with culturally distinct politics against the power to produce shared social space wielded by constitutions, brand identities, or a big enough transmission network. (In America of the 1920s and 1930s, for example, it took 50,000 watts of radio power and an entire telephone system to throw a single *National Barn Dance*.)<sup>60</sup>

### Space versus place

The notion that *place* (the physical environment though which we move) and *space* (the practice and lived experience of place) should be primary constituents in a musicology of the Americas is hardly one for which I can take credit; the seminal theoretical work of Adam Krims, model analyses of hip-hop by Tricia Rose and Murray Forman, and an increasing body of paradigm-shifting work from younger scholars provide abundant evidence of that.<sup>61</sup> It might be somewhat more original to note that a focus on—and a clear distinction between—space and place can help clarify at least one nagging issue that

59. “The representation of space” and “spatial practice” are two parts of a tripartite epistemology of the social production of space taken from Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 41–47.

60. The *National Barn Dance* program was first broadcast over WLS (“World’s Largest Store”), the Chicago radio station started by mail-order giant Sears, Roebuck in 1924. By the 1930s, the WLS *Barn Dance* was “broadcast” over NBC’s Blue Network, which used existing telephone lines to hook up local stations across North America.

61. Krims, *Music and Urban Geography*; Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*; and Forman, *The ‘Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*.

still troubles many scholars of North American musics: how can we explore our intuitive sense that music as made and consumed in this hemisphere is different from the classical traditions of Europe and Asia, and not fall into the manifold historiographic traps often lumped together as “American exceptionalism”?

The early twenty-first century seems a singularly unpropitious time to focus on what’s “American” about American music: if, in the previous two centuries, questions of musical style, genre, talent, and essence could be harnessed to the abstract problem of defining what position a young United States of America should take among the world’s nations and empires, by now the emphasis on America as a “special place” seems, if not politically reactionary, at least unequal to the task of imagining the flows of power and knowledge that define the contemporary global system. As George Lipsitz warned over a decade ago:

Within fields like American studies, the nation-state has served as the logical—and seemingly inevitable—object of inquiry. Even within the state, physical places have taken center stage as sites of struggle—the frontier, the farm, the factory, and the city. In American studies, this approach emerged in part because of the centrality of the national landscape to the national imagination. . . . Yet many of the cultural and community crises we face today emanate from the ways in which the sense of place that guided social movements and scholarship in the past has now become obsolete.<sup>62</sup>

Lipsitz’s provocative diagnosis might well apply to the study of American music; musicologist Richard Crawford, looking for a way to distinguish a broad survey of music making in the United States from traditional narratives of music history, was on familiar but shifting historiographic ground when he analogized it to a bird’s-eye view of *The American Musical Landscape*.<sup>63</sup> It takes nothing away from Crawford’s achievement to note that, as the reversal in Lipsitz’s quotation above implies, it will probably not have a (useful) sequel.

It would be obvious to Lipsitz that musicologists can no longer survey a distinctively “American” musical landscape, since commodified sounds made on this continent simultaneously pervade and are pervaded by the equally commodified sounds of the entire globe. How then, can an emphasis on culture as spatial process help to mediate the contradictions of (what is left of) American music? If place no longer works as a theoretical category—i.e., *this music sounds American*—let us use space as an index of practice, noting and analyzing the ways in which *this music sounds like everyday life in (some part of) America*.

62. Lipsitz, *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*, 4–5.

63. Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape: The Business of Musicianship from Billings to Gershwin*.

### Tales of two cities: Practicing spatial musicology

What would a spatial musicology, focused on practice, look like? Let me conclude by highlighting two recent studies of popular music and the lived experience of American urban spaces. One of the most persuasive theorizations of spatial practice—that of Michel de Certeau—distinguishes *strategy*, the domain of proprietors, of those who “own” space and control its relations, from *tactics*, the everyday decisions of those who have no “proper” (*propre*) claim to the spaces they traverse, and who thus undermine fixed spatial logics with the provisional immediacy of lived experience: “A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. . . . Whatever it wins, it does not keep.” In a much-quoted essay, de Certeau contrasted the strategic comprehension of New York City as an orderly grid gained from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center with the tactical decisions required when navigating, blindly, the streets below.<sup>64</sup>

A recent study by musicologist Caroline O’Meara takes this everyday spatial practice, “walking in the city,” as the hermeneutic starting point for a detailed analytical reading of “Too Many Creeps,” a post-punk track recorded by the Bush Tetras in and about the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1981. On one level, “Too Many Creeps” is a young woman’s lament at being hassled by the addicts and drug dealers in her neighborhood. But that space, Alphabet City, had since the early 1800s occupied a marginal position, literally “off the grid” of Manhattan (the lettered streets east of First Avenue occupy a conspicuous bulge in the island’s coastline), with long blocks, few amenities, and no good connection to the transportation networks that make New York City livable. Close reading of the musical setting for “Too Many Creeps” shows the musicians using the crisply articulated metric patterns of funk as a stand-in for the organizing power of the grid, playing at the edges of its coordinates in a way that “spotlights the spatial organization of the city, lyrically and musically . . . [and] embodies for its listeners the experience of both moving through and thinking about the streets of Manhattan.” If, as one of O’Meara’s sources argues, “the grid is [America’s] true national anthem,” then spatial musicology is here at work transcribing that anthem’s distinct rhythms of space and movement.<sup>65</sup>

On the other side of the continent, anthropologist (and cellist) Marina Peterson has spent the better part of a decade querying the intersection of strategic thinking in the downtown spaces of Los Angeles with the tactical, musical decisions that take place in and around a single location, bounded by Olive, Grand, Third, and Fourth Streets, at the edge of the downtown arts district. The Watercourt of California Plaza is a characteristically postmodern

64. Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix, 91–96.

65. O’Meara, “The Bush Tetras, ‘Too Many Creeps,’ and New York City,” 208, 211–12.



example of L.A. urban geography: created, along with the office towers that ring it, by the 1960s urban renewal which scoured the decaying neighborhoods of old Bunker Hill, this kind of privatized corporate amenity functions as a proxy for an imagined public space at the heart of “multicultural” Los Angeles—thanks largely to the free popular music performances programmed there each summer for the past twenty-five years by the nonprofit (but corporate supported) concert presenter Grand Performances. Having read Eduard Soja, Michael Dear, and other postmodern geographers, Peterson is well aware that this space for public music making is fundamentally structured by movements of global capital: “In Los Angeles, trends of privatization, downtown revitalization, immigration, and an emphasis on arts and culture that are defining features of neoliberal globalization provide a context in which international arts programming and the figuring of local multiculturalism as international help shape Los Angeles as a global city in emergent ways.”<sup>66</sup>

But Peterson has also read Henri Lefebvre, who, as she notes, holds that the negotiations around urban space are not only legible by those who write social theory; spatial politics are something that anyone enmeshed in them can readily hear and feel. So she picked up her cello and joined the daKah Hip-Hop Orchestra as it rehearsed and played a free concert in California Plaza. The result is a musicologically sensitive account of daKah’s distinctive fusion of classical orchestra and classic hip-hop (down to the technical tricks used to make a live cello section approximate a Gang Starr beat originally played on the Akai MPC-2000), and an exploration of the myriad ways that daKah, “drawing on multiple musical worlds to create a singular sonic experience,” works to “transform the space” at the corner of Olive and Fourth, “invoking a diverse L.A. imagined as the sum of its parts.”<sup>67</sup>

Even if we ultimately tire of studying “American music,” the everyday spatial and musical practices of all Americans will remain a worthy focus of scholarly work—work that will continue to point, one trusts, to the transformative diversity of pan-American musics, and toward a musicology spacious enough to encompass them all.

## Reflections: American Music Studies in 2011

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Although no set of five essays could represent the full spectrum of scholarship on music and the United States, the recurrence of certain themes among our authors says much about the prevailing state of our field. The term

66. Peterson, *Sound, Space, and the City: Civic Performance in Downtown Los Angeles*, 3. For an introduction to the postmodern geography of the “Los Angeles School,” see Dear, *The Postmodern Urban Condition*.

67. Peterson, *Sound, Space, and the City*, 10, 78–84.

“Americanist” is not explicitly disavowed by any of our contributors. Yet American exceptionalism carries uncomfortable ideological baggage across the board, and methodological alternatives emerge here to challenge tightly bounded modes of studying U.S. music. Some of these concerns reach back to longstanding debates over the exact definition of the term “America(n).” But they also indicate how scholars today must adapt flexibly to a transnational U.S., one characterized by global communication, economic interdependence across borders, and multidimensional mobility. How relevant is the fundamental concept of musical practices originating in the U.S. if, as Alejandro L. Madrid argues, earlier definitions of a nation-state no longer hold? What ramifications follow from analyzing American music, or any kind of musical culture, if we employ the spatial methodology advanced by Robert Fink? Following the same thread, how will ideas about space and place continue to unsettle our vision of American music with the expansion of virtual worlds and their musical communities? Within the blink of an eye, the playing field for studying American identity, or any national identity, through music has been simultaneously leveled through globalization and sharpened in a drive to preserve the distinctiveness of local and regional cultures.

Two prominent markers of the rapidly changing racial and ethnic constitution of the U.S. include the Presidency of Barack Obama and the results of the 2010 census. The latter documents that a new citizenry is rapidly taking shape; the Hispanic population, to note the most striking trend, grew by 43 percent over the last decade, accounting for more than half of the country’s overall population growth, a demographic shift about which our authors are keenly aware.<sup>68</sup> Adopting a racial model that expands beyond a black and white binary offers Madrid an opportunity to sharpen a critique of the received canon, of pedagogical priorities, and of the relevance of today’s music curriculum. Likewise, a “nomadic” musicology, as articulated by George E. Lewis, might blossom from experiencing contemporary life as multiethnic, multilingual, and globalized. Yet even as definitions of American music are reconfigured in response to changing times, the rubric continues to hold significance, drawing on a fertile historiographical tradition, responding to a nation whose actions demand continual vigilance, and offering a valuable lens for understanding ourselves and our changing world.

Interdisciplinarity has long been integral to American music studies, and continuing to build bridges across disciplines remains critical for the intellectual and political future of the field. Gayle Sherwood Magee’s call for more detailed, and long overdue, class-based analyses of American music encourages such cross-disciplinary conversations, just as it reminds us how powerfully social class shapes expectations, opportunities, and experiences of both musical and academic life. Yet institutional support for interdisciplinary work on U.S.

68. Humes, Jones, and Ramirez, *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010/U.S. Census Briefs*, 3.

music, as detailed in Sherrie Tucker's cautionary piece, has eroded on many campuses, often masking ideological agendas with budgetary exigencies. There is no denying the formidable challenges facing higher education today. Perhaps, as Tucker suggests, drawing on the history of social activism and advocacy that helped build American music studies in the first place might yield a productive strategy for moving forward. Now, more than ever, we need to confront the marginalization of music within academic discourse by forging connections inside and outside the academy, seeking broader audiences, creating new partnerships, and finding additional pathways by which to inform and educate diverse constituencies about the centrality of music to our culture at large. Whether by developing curriculum initiatives, interdisciplinary ventures, or outreach programs, American music studies appears especially well positioned to advocate on behalf of music studies as a whole.

We were also intrigued by what our contributors left unstated. Race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and many other markers of identity garnered limited consideration, suggesting just how integral—perhaps even taken for granted—such concerns have become to the field. Generally speaking, our authors also do not lobby for attention to a particular genre, region, or historical period. Rather than indicating that all bases have been covered, however, this outcome likely grew out of our inaugural questions, which were framed around methodology. In truth, we are well aware that many neglected corners remain. An extraordinary amount of work, for example, needs to be done in exploring American music before 1900, a vast terrain that calls out for substantially greater attention.<sup>69</sup> Looking ahead, we wonder how the field will be reshaped by today's grass-roots "glocal" movements, as Americanists seek to reconcile local, national, and global concerns. And what of the next wave in studying race and gender, class and sexuality? Are we prepared to vault past the tendency to build segregated historiographies and reassemble the larger picture(s)? Interestingly, our contributors seem to assume peaceful coexistence between musicological and ethnomusicological approaches to studying U.S. music. While this echoes the multidisciplinary foundations of scholarship in American musical traditions, we wonder whether it also foreshadows a larger trend, perhaps a merging or reconnection, that will develop further in the new century. Much remains to be done as well in tracking and exchanging scholarship on U.S. music as published in other countries and languages.

From disability studies to ecomusicology, from studying children's music to analyzing video-game soundtracks, scholarly writing continues to bring forth new ways of understanding musical life in the United States. Responding to an era of swift and unpredictable change, these novel approaches energize the field, even as they challenge established analytic models. With the rapid spread of social media, the steady advance of corporate culture, and the shift-

69. For a powerful statement about the need for more scholarship in early American music, see Preston, "Standpoint: What Happened to the Nineteenth Century?"

ing geopolitical landscape of the world at large, our modes of interpretation and methods of communication are likely to remain in flux for some time. Whether these developments will supplement, complement, or supplant long-standing scholarly practices—such as the tradition of archival research, the commitment to face-to-face ethnography, and the aspiration to publish in print—remains to be seen.

For many scholars, studying American music carries political resonances and responsibilities, whether through positioning music in relationship to the ever-changing complexities of a nation-state, being alert to the implications of power in multiple domains, or advocating through musical scholarship for social justice. At the same time, those of us drawn to the field often value the “experimental, iconoclastic, humane spirit” that has characterized American Studies writ large, respecting its sense of adventure, idealism, and community.<sup>70</sup> Not only is it difficult to envision scholars in American music steering away from those legacies, but it also seems likely that the field will maintain a fundamental attraction to hybrid constellations of research topics, questions, and methodologies. Hybridity thrives on restlessness, however, and the study of American music shows no signs of establishing a single disciplinary home. Rather, the field will likely continue to carve out new intellectual habitats. Perhaps our most important political responsibility in the face of today’s abundant uncertainties is to remind ourselves and our colleagues—whether in the academy or the public sector—that making music and listening to it remain among the most ubiquitous and deeply felt activities in the human experience.

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70. The phrase quoted here appeared in an assessment of the field of American studies, published on the thirtieth anniversary of the journal *American Quarterly*: Mechling, “Some Voices In and Around American Studies: Introduction,” 339.

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